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ABSTRACT

A major benefit of inclusive education is to give students and staff learning and teaching opportunities that reflect the wide range of contributions by and roles open to people similar to and different from themselves. Inclusion covers all students, including those with behavior problems, lower academic abilities, and health conditions. For inclusion to succeed, schools must think about how students function in each of four general domains: (1) language and literacy; (2) cognitive-conceptual development; (3) psychosocial functioning; and (4) sensory-physical abilities. Several educational methods and curriculum designs to help students in these domains are suggested, including: support systems to deal with behavior problems; structuring models of effective instruction throughout the school; teaching strategies such as guided notes and cooperative educational curricula; a contextual and social approach to teaching rather than an individualized approach; treating students with disabilities like students without disabilities, especially with regard to core subjects such as math and language arts; and the need for high quality teaching methods for all students. Approaches to gifted education are also discussed. While the common view is that gifted students should be taught in inclusive classrooms, the research seems to support gifted students being taught in isolation from other students. Recommendations for developing inclusive education include: increased support and involvement of parents, students, and teachers; planning curriculum change and providing resources for that change; and providing continuous staff development. Discussion also focuses on special needs, techniques for individualizing instruction, guidelines for helping students who work hard but still have difficulties, attending to student differences, self concept, outside factors such as home life and socioeconomic status, intelligence, brain research, and the legal rights of children with special needs. The paper concludes that, though inclusive education can be difficult and does not always work, it can be very rewarding for teachers and beneficial in promoting the personal and educational development of all students. (Contains 17 references.) (ND)

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Teaching in an Inclusive Classroom: An Essay to Young Teachers

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Teaching in an Inclusive Classroom: An Essay to Young Teachers

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INTRODUCTION

Like it or not, inclusive education is here. Inclusive education is the name for the educational movement to include all children, regardless of academic abilities or academic disabilities into regular classrooms. Typically, inclusion refers to the integration of special education students into regular classrooms. The inclusive education movement has been supported by most parents, especially parents of special education students. These parents make the point that their children have the right to be educated in a "regular" classroom.

Inclusive education is one of today's educational "hot" topics, and there are a variety of positions on inclusive education. Positively stated, one goal of inclusive education is to help students and staff gain an understanding and an appreciation of all groups present in the local, national, and global communities. Negatively stated, inclusive education, or mainstreaming, means placing "special needs" students into regular classroom situations. Inclusion has generated a number of practical questions for teachers, who are faced with new and confusingly difficult roles and responsibilities. The whole "problem" of inclusion has been exacerbated by the fact that inclusion has not

brought with it expanded support staff or funding. This lack of support has increased teacher dissatisfaction and frustration.

We agree. Whether it can be supported philosophically or not, inclusion is a practical problem for teachers -- it makes the job of teaching more difficult. The teachers we have spoken with about inclusion have talked openly about the difficulties of teaching in an inclusive classroom. The reason we have used the term "problem" -- which is negative -- is because inclusive education has brought teachers a great deal of anxiety and extra work. However, there are some very positive aspects to the whole idea of integration. The purpose of this paper is to explore some of the reasons for involving special needs students in the classroom and to suggest ways to make this involvement more beneficial for teachers and other students. The first point we want you to know is that, even if you don't like the idea of inclusive, you will be "facing it" as a teacher.

Many people, including some teachers, believe that mainstreaming means to bring special needs students into "regular" classrooms with "normal" children. But there are some problems with this perspective. The first is that there is no "regular" classroom with "normal" children. Children are never "normal." All children are unique. Because they are unique, they all have individual strengths and individual weaknesses.

In our experience, all children can perform well at some tasks. But schools are a unique culture with a unique set of rules. Most of us take this culture for granted because we are accustomed to it. In fact, those of you who are reading

this paper are probably especially adept living in this culture. If you were not, it is unlikely you would have made the choice to become a teacher.

Schools have their own criteria for success and for failure. Given the criteria used to evaluate success in schools, some students are very "successful;" some are not so "successful." This does not mean, however, that those students who are not successful in school will not eventually find a place in life where they will be successful. We're sure that all of you have heard stories of famous intellects -- people like Thomas Edison and Albert Einstein -- who were busts in schools. The point we are making here is that schools have their own unique societies with their own unique rules.

When a child enters a school, that child becomes a student and must follow the rules that go along with being a student. In schools, all students are "ignorant" (meaning that there are areas that they have ignored) and all students have weaknesses (meaning that there are skills that they do not know and need to learn). Some children take to being students more easily than others. One young woman we know has been so adept at learning the curriculum -- "school learning" comes so easy to her -- that she needs individual challenges. The school has responded by isolating her, alone, in the hall where she spends her solitude working on advanced, university-level material for almost all her subjects. She spends the day virtually by herself. Have we made our point redundantly enough?

Let us ask you a question. And, we would like you to think about it carefully. In the situation we describe above, the school has obviously decided that its task is to educate the student by encouraging her to work to her academic

potential and has all but ignored her social life. Often, newspapers write celebratory articles about young students like these who are so successful at academic learning that they have graduated from university at 13 years of age. Our society seems to constantly honor these young people, calling attention to their genius. But, seriously, what do you think? How do you think the school should handle those people who are so obviously gifted in the ways of the school? Is it good to encourage students to attend university at the age of 11? What is the variety of options that schools have? What are the good points and the bad points of any decision that could be made?

We believe that there are some basic truths to teaching. One truth is that all students need individualized attention to help them develop in particular areas. It should be no surprise that students have special needs. We all have special needs, and we can all benefit from personal and individual contact and support. Although teachers are expected to teach a class of thirty students all at once, as a teacher you need to remember that within this class you will be teaching thirty unique people. Although it is a difficult task, you should try to find ways to build success into each student's learning experiences.

Building an Inclusive Classrooms

Most teachers walk a fine line. On one hand, like people in any job they work like crazy to make their life in the classroom easier. On the other hand, they reach out to young people, helping as much as they can, knowing that the more they reach out the harder they work and the more difficult their job can become. Teaching can be easiest for those who care the least.

The biggest "problem" with teaching is that there are people to teach. Content by itself is easy. Most teachers, unless they are teaching out of their subject areas, love their content. But it's students that are the problems; and classrooms are filled with students. Students are both the joy and the bane of teaching.

Let us repeat an obvious, but important, bit of information. The impact of this bit of information is incredible. Each person you will teach is different from each other person you will teach. Not all kids are born with the same ability. Some are smarter than others. Some are more skilled. Some have a home environment that is richer. Some have particular and individual difficulties that make school harder.

The Response of Schools to the Differences of Students

Historically, schools have responded in three very general ways to the differences of students. Long ago, when we went to primary and secondary school, a teacher took all comers. The classroom was filled with people who came. Whoever showed up in a particular grade, or sometimes grades, was in a teacher's class. These students were equally as valuable, but not equally as skilled or able at schooling. To the teacher, this meant that instruction should be different. There were students in, for example, a grade six class that could not read at all and students in that same class who could, and had, read very sophisticated literature -- probably more sophisticated literature than the teacher could, of had, read.

To cope with the sets of differing abilities that any teacher might find, the teacher would often organize the classroom into groups of some kind or another. As evenly as possible, a teacher would create groups of like ability in math, or reading, or writing, or spelling, or whatever topic area might be studied. Often, without even having heard of the concept, a teacher would organize quite complicated patterns of peer tutoring where a student with high ability in reading, for example, would work with a student whose reading ability was not as high.

We were in such classrooms. No formal training, as best as we can remember, was given; but, those students who were the tutors -- those with the highest abilities -- just seemed to know what to do. Go over the material, and if the tutee made an error correct it. As far as we can remember, it sort of worked. Probably we didn't know any different. It was just what school was like.

One teacher we remember had a intricate personal classroom ordering system where, for each subject, a student classified himself or herself into the classroom chair that corresponded to the student's achievement number in a particular subject. (We aren't sure how the teacher arrived at the number, but we always trusted that it was accurate.) Every chair in the room was numbered, from 1 to 30, with chair 1 being savored by the "top" student and chair 30 being scorned by the "bottom" student.

On cue, when a certain subject began for the day, students would move to take their places in the designated chairs -- sort of a perverse and hierarchical "Upset the fruit basket." It was a special day when the teacher announced chair changes -- a source of pride for students who moved up or a grudging

submission when students moved down. Although this practice today seen abhorrent, we honestly remember that this teacher was a good teacher. At the time, we didn't consider her actions as anything less than "the way the world operated." Of course, we were lucky enough to not be in seat 30, not ever; and, the view from close to the top was obviously a better memory than the view from the bottom.

More recently, schools at least in schools where there was more than one class of a particular grade have shunned such classroom organizing. Small flocks of "bluebirds" or "crows" or "buzzards" no longer nested in the same classroom. Instead, whole classes might be organized by ability. Students who were "bright" and "able" were put together into a classroom; students who were "less bright" or "less able" were put into another classroom.

Typically, this "lower" ability group was joined by a group of students who were unremarkable for their skills or abilities. Instead, they were known for their behavior. They were the behavior "problems." Schools became virtual ghettos, streamed by skill and ability. And, like any economic or social system where scarce goods and services are distributed, schools also distributed their resources. In response to the streaming of students, teachers were also streamed. Some worked with high ability groups; others worked with low ability groups. This whole system of ghettoizing schools was known as homogeneous grouping.

As you might detect from the tone of our writing, we are not fans of homogeneous grouping. It might seem to make schools easier to run and content easier to teach, but to us there were obvious problems. One problem

was practical. Homogeneous grouping tended to convince teachers and administrators that the students they taught as part of a homogeneous group were, in fact, all the same. In real fact, these students were not the same. They might be together because they all scored within a certain range on a standardized achievement test, but they were far from the same in terms of needs, behaviors, histories, and personalities. To us, homogeneous grouping sort of dulled schools to the needs of even "homogeneous" students.

Another problem was that the low ability groups became a wasteland for the stubble of school society. Research suggests over and over again that low ability students soon become treated as low deserving students. They are given the least prepared teachers -- often teachers teaching outside their own subject area -- and are subjected to the lowest standards for achievement and behavior. Surprise, surprise; these students react accordingly. They stay in school the lowest number of years they can; and when they are at school they often are not at school. They skip. School isn't for them, and they quit to pursue other labor. No one seems too sad. If they would have come to school, we often hear people say, they would have done better. Blaming the victim, we often suggest.

Recent transformations in North American society are forcing schools to change. One important change is that educational funding is shrinking. Homogeneous grouping is expensive. Another important change is that North American democracy has been responding to the demands of its citizens for equal opportunities. Parents of low ability students, students who just years ago would have been moved into their own segregated classroom, are now demanding that their children be allowed to attend class with

"regular" students. Even disabled children have been added to the roles -- mainstreamed -- into these "regular" classrooms. The North American classroom is now, more than in years, the "inclusive" classroom.

Teaching in an Inclusive Classroom

Many teachers have disagreed philosophically with ability grouping. They believe that all students should be included into regular classrooms. Still, the obvious differences between students in inclusive classrooms are hard to ignore. Teaching an inclusive classroom is difficult. We would like to tell you that we have the answers to teaching in inclusive classrooms, but we don't. Still, we can make some suggestions that we believe will be helpful.

One purpose of this paper is to review what's happening in inclusive classrooms. We hope that, as you read, your reading and thinking will suggest some ways that you, as a teacher who will probably face an inclusive classroom, might be able to plan for the variety of different needs you will face in today's inclusive classrooms. We certainly don't have the last word on inclusive classrooms, but the word that we read is not all bad. Certainly, teaching a wide range of students has its problems, but most of the research on inclusive classrooms is positive rather than negative. But you need to go into an inclusive classroom with your eyes, and minds, open. We think this paper will help.

As we have mentioned, inclusive education is the name for the educational movement to include children with disabilities into regular classrooms. One important goal of inclusive education is to help students and staff gain an

understanding and an appreciation of all groups present in the local, national, and global communities. For those people interested in furthering equality in education, inclusive education holds many promises. First and foremost, however, inclusive education offers students and staff learning and teaching opportunities that reflect the wide range of contributions by and roles open to people similar to and different from themselves.

Inclusive education means including. In theory, inclusive education means that people should have a place -- every person should be included -- within the political, socio-economic, and education fabric of society. In practice, however, current definitions of inclusive education have become quite specialized. Not all students are included into regular classrooms. It depends on the school and the district in which you are teaching.

Inclusive education means different things to different people. Many teachers and administrators disagree with the whole concept. Not everyone agrees that all people should be included in the educational system. Even for those who agree with inclusion, there are great debates about who should be included, or excluded. Sometimes the debate is theoretical, sometimes philosophical, sometimes practical, and sometimes the debate is deeply emotional.

For those who care the most about inclusive education and who champion its cause, the question of whether or not to include people in the educational system hinges on the question of what the role of education should be. Should education be seen as a social mission; or, should the role of education be seen as an academic mission. Some educators have wrestled the debate over inclusive education out of the practical and reframed it as an issue of

social justice. These educators state that the "separate" education of "special" education students is not only unequal but is also detrimental to the development of all students.

Regardless of how the debate will be settled, there are still some things that you need to know about an inclusive classroom. As a beginning teacher, at least part of your agenda is survival. This makes the question of inclusion practical. Like it or not, your classroom will likely be an inclusive classroom. Your job is to teach the students you find there.

The inclusive classroom differs from a homogeneous classroom in one special way -- the needs of the students are more obvious. Individual differences hit teachers right in the face. There is no way that a teacher can pretend these differences do not exist. Somehow, some way, teachers must respond to these needs. That is the job of teaching -- to respond to students' educational needs. These students need additional care.

One obvious response to the additional care needed by students in a "regular" classroom is that teachers must learn how to make their classrooms more caring places for students. Teachers must encourage the growth of a classroom culture that provides caring while enforcing order; and, they must become part of the solution for students, regardless of whether the problems are learning problems, physical problems, or behavior problems. Schools must provide a curriculum of caring so that each student can have at least one school adult as a concerned advocate. That adult is typically the teacher.

What types of inclusions need to be considered?

One problem with inclusive education is that there is not a consistent idea of what conditions should be considered when asking and answering questions about inclusion. So far we have spoken about inclusion as if we were discussing "special" education students mainstreamed into the regular classroom, behavior problems, or students with lower academic abilities. But, inclusion is inclusion. Full inclusion means that all students are included. Health conditions also must be considered also when discussing the inclusion of all students into the regular classroom.

At least six categories of health conditions have implications for the inclusion of all students into the educational classroom. These conditions include: (1) "hidden" health conditions (e.g., juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, sickle cell anemia, asthma, and cystic fibrosis); (2) infectious conditions (e.g., Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome [AIDS], hepatitis B, and cytomegalovirus); (3) conditions which cause the child to be "fragile" (e.g., children in the final stages of AIDS, leukemia, of renal failure); (4) conditions that require the assistance of technology (such as ventilators, gastrostomy tubes, tracheotomy tubes, and catheterization tubes); (5) neurological conditions (e.g., seizure disorders, meningitis, and brain tumors); and (6) body and skin deformities (amputations, craniofacial conditions, burns).

And, just like any inclusion, the inclusion of students with health conditions impacts the whole environment of the school. Schools need to actively discuss health care and emergency medical plans, how educational teams will communicate, how curriculum will be shaped, how do deal with school

absences, what student placement considerations should be made, how orientation and technical assistance should be done, how transition into a regular classroom should be accomplished, and how transportation is affected.

Inclusion adds the need for different curriculum approaches for different students. Schools may wish to treat students with disabilities as normally as possible; still, they can not pretend that students with disabilities do not have different characteristics or different needs than those without disabilities. As much as we might wish it were not so, some characteristics limit the success that students with disabilities can have when they are mainstreamed into regular classrooms.

We have noted that all students are different; however, it is also true that students share certain characteristics. For example, all students function in different ways; however, schools call on all students to function in at least four general domains. These domains are: (1) language and literacy, (2) cognitive-conceptual development, (3) psychosocial functioning, and (4) sensory-physical abilities. Each of these domains has its own set of skills, knowledges, and attitudes; and, these skills, knowledges, and attitudes in turn affect the curriculum the school or classroom must adopt and use. To really consider inclusion thoughtfully, schools must think about how students function in each of these areas. Hopefully, the skills, knowledge, and attitudes in these areas can be improved through the considered use of a variety of education methods and creative curriculum planning.

For example, students with behavioral problems make structural and curriculum demands on schools. Quite simply, schools must change to address the needs of these students. Students with behavior disorders usually have difficulty functioning in regular classrooms. In regular classrooms, they pose persistent problems. The teacher is stuck on the horns of a dilemma. To send the student away harms the student's learning; to not send the student away keeps the behavior problem right in the teacher's face and, worse yet, in the midst of the other students. Classroom teachers are often reluctant or unable to deal with disruptive behavior. Logic only works with the logical. Reasoning with the reasonable. Punishment can cause more problems than it solves.

How can teachers and schools respond? One way is to offer support. Almost all teachers who face behavioral problems need behavioral support of some kind or another. Sometimes the support is as simple as someone to talk to, to commiserate with, or to share rough drafts of ideas. Some of these informal support systems become friends for life, honest and appreciated therapy against the rails of difficulty.

Some support systems are more formal. Schools, for example, might set up behavioral support groups to help other teachers and students deal with the dilemmas created when students with behavior problems act out these problems. These formal support systems are often very helpful for teachers, but like all school programs they need to be entered into thoughtfully. Before setting up a behavioral support project in any school, the following questions must be answered: Who are the targets for support? What should the curriculum be? What are the roles and responsibilities of the people

involved? What methodologies work best? What working links and support, training, and evaluation should be set up? Behavioral support groups must work with the school curriculum, not outside of or extra to the curriculum.

In successful behavioral support projects, the behavioral support teacher works with mainstream teachers to contain disturbing students rather than exorcise them from the classroom. Exorcism may work in movies, but in school it creates a variety of attendant difficulties. On the other hand, behavioral support projects have helped schools improve their attendance, have helped increase the use of school psychological services for consultancy, and have helped decrease psychologist casework.

Typically, schools seem to hope that students with behavioral problems go away. But there are other ways to deal with behavior problems. Sometimes, simply working with behavioral problems can have dramatic and positive effects. For example, research reports that when students with low grade point averages and high absenteeism rates were provided tutoring services and their teachers were offered consultation about to make classroom environments less punitive, the classroom environment became more positive, more students completed assignments, and dropouts and suspensions decreased. For students who have experienced little success in school, as is the case with many behavioral problems, a little thing like turning in assignments can begin to spell really positive changes in outlook, attitudes, and actions. We have mentioned the concept of success cycles before. When a student begins to experience some success, no matter how small, that student will often begin to do the little things that will encourage more success -- like working harder. These activities will spur even further

success, which will encourage other success-building activities, which will bring further success -- and so the cycle turns itself out.

The learning of secondary students with or without disabilities can be increased by structuring models of effective instruction throughout the school. These principles embodied within these frameworks and models of effective instruction -- principles like establishing a positive classroom environment, keeping students actively involved, and modifying instructions -- encourage more learning to take place. In short, these principles are in themselves good teaching activities that can be applied to all students in all classrooms. They work.

The inclusion of students with severe disabilities into classroom activities calls for teachers and schools to work in teams that consider three inclusion outcomes. These outcomes can be applied to both disabled and nondisabled students. These outcomes are: (1) curriculum inclusion, (2) social inclusion, and (3) learning inclusion. In a specific example, a language arts teacher and a special education teacher may work together to provide teaching support, prosthetic support, and interpretive support to a disabled student by developing both collaborative and consultative relationships with each other. When the task is too great for one teacher to do alone, often two or more teachers can work together.

Some teaching strategies work especially well for integrating students with learning disabilities into regular-curriculum content classes with nonhandicapped peers. Two such strategies are guided notes and guided notes with supervised review time. The results of using guided notes only or

guided notes with supervised review time are that students with learning disabilities realized sizable gains using guided notes and that using the guided notes with supervised review time strategy produced socially significant gains across all students.

Other research suggests that cooperative educational curricula, teacher modeling, and coaching techniques can have an important and positive effect on the interactions of the nondisabled students with their peers with autism. Students who played games together before and after either educational lessons about children with disabilities or who were taught by teachers who modeled and coached students how to interact during play with children with disabilities were clearly more able to work with disabled students. Nondisabled students were willing to prompt and reinforce as long as an adult was able to model for them, coach them, or encourage them to continue their efforts. Results like these point to the need for structuring the classroom environment in more positive and structured ways that will work to ensure success in mainstreaming for both nondisabled children and children. Research findings about working with disabled students were consistent across all grade levels, and improved the classroom actions of students as young as kindergarten.

Research has also suggested that successful inclusion programs usually include the following components: (1) active parental involvement in development and implementation, (2) technical support for faculty and family members, (3) an individually designed integration plan stressing learning and socializing within the context of motivating activities that are matched to learning styles and activity preferences, (4) a peer buddy program

which expands social and communicative skills in a structured setting, (5) an ecological approach to curriculum development, and (6) creative management of challenging behaviors. Research findings suggest that successful programs have certain redundant features. One redundant feature is that they emphasize a contextual and social approach to teaching instead of the individualized approach that has tended to dominate the education of children with disabilities.

In many ways, students with disabilities need to be treated like students without disabilities. Research in the core subject areas like math, language arts, social studies, and sciences supports the belief that special education teachers need to teach effective test-taking strategies to adolescents with mild disabilities and to teach those other academic skills that enable students to cope in regular education classrooms. This list of "teachables" is little different than the list that could be constructed for any student in any classroom. It simply stands to reason that all students will benefit from instruction in these areas.

Teaching skills like interactive dialogue between teacher and student or between student and student has also shown to provide interventions that are equally effective in promoting clarity and thematic salience in student reports and essays. In short, high-quality teaching methods tend to work with all students regardless of their abilities or disabilities. This point may seem gratuitous, but we make it for at least one reason. Often, teachers and schools seem to act as if all students deserve quality instruction. In addition, quality instruction also benefits the teacher. Students who begin to succeed in classrooms will change and grow. They may never become as academically, or

socially, or physically skilled as other students; but, like all students, they can and will improve. The quality of their lives will, again like all students, improve. We believe this improvement is the right of any student.

Approaches to gifted education

Gifted students are an additional educational consideration. There have been many critical changes in gifted education over the past century. These changes have included the naming of gifted students as a different and "separate" group of students, the establishment of a credible research data base that helps provide an expanded understanding to the needs and abilities of gifted students, an expanded definition of giftedness, and an expansion of gifted programming to serve a greater number and diversity of students who are gifted. Traditionally, gifted students have been treated in a "special education approach" which is a static, one-way process. The result is that gifted students have faced a number of specific problems in areas like identification, programming, and categorical confusion.

Gifted education in Canada is being heavily influenced by movements like inclusive education and school restructuring. Ideally, in the inclusive school, instructional provisions are individualized and student-centered. Student diversity is celebrated, and teachers and related professionals develop cooperative and collaborative relationships.

The research on gifted students is surprising. It suggests that the greatest academic gains among gifted students were found in programs that grouped high ability children together and provided a differentiated curriculum

matched to their abilities and skills. The beneficial effect of homogeneous grouping with differentiated instruction was also evident for students of medium ability and low ability. In some ways, these research findings are a puzzle for educators. The common view is that gifted students should not be separated from their peers in regular classrooms. Instead, most teachers believe that gifted students should be taught by a teacher in an inclusive classroom. A self-contained gifted class will simply not meet the needs of gifted students. But research does not seem to support this perception. The puzzle is what to do, and how to understand, the research findings.

Most educational policies in North America seem to try to speak two ways. On one hand, they offer the promise of educating children with disabilities in regular classrooms with nondisabled peers. At the same time, they promise to provide specialized programs for the brightest and most capable students. The result is that trying to hold both decisions at once can lead to policy conflicts.

The jury is still out. The research seems to support gifted students being taught in isolation from other students. But no research in itself is convincing. Some authors contend that ability grouping is necessary for gifted children. Some suggest that gifted students should be educated in regular classrooms. Research also suggests that teachers of gifted students show that teachers trained in gifted education demonstrated greater teaching skills and more positive classroom climates than teachers who had no training in gifted education. Gifted students whose teachers were trained to teach gifted students reported a greater emphasis on higher level thinking skills and on discussion and less emphasis on lecture and grades.

Process-based instructional (PBI) teaching models have also shown that they can be successfully applied to all mainstream classrooms that contain students with diverse skills and abilities. Process-based instructional teaching models help teachers individualize instruction by involving all students in the teaching and learning process through the development of plans for curriculum and learning activities. When process-based instructional teaching models are used in the classroom, gifted students can contribute to lessons and activities and work at their own pace and level under teacher supervision.

How do people feel about inclusive education?

Inclusion programs are being formed all across the country. However, they are not universally applied to all situations. Usually inclusive education can be found in some, but not all, schools in a district. Inclusive education usually involves some, but not all, students with disabilities. Research findings suggest that: (1) no district in Canada or the United States requires inclusion for all students with all disabilities; (2) some handicapping conditions are effectively included; (3) most inclusion programs are new; (4) there are significantly fewer inclusive programs at the secondary level than at the elementary level, and (5) that comprehensive program evaluations of inclusion are limited.

Most teachers do their best with the hand they are dealt. When students, regardless of disabilities, are placed into regular classrooms, seldom are they left to die. Special education teachers usually began to collaborate with regular educators to help ensure the success of their students. Overall the attitudes of

teachers not involved in inclusive education tend to be neutral or slightly negative, while attitudes of teachers involved in inclusion were positive.

Student teachers, on the other hand, show different responses. In general, before student teaching, education students favor the idea of mainstreaming and report their willingness to teach students whose handicaps do not inhibit their own learning or the learning of others in regular classes. Research data indicate that advanced students hold more positive attitudes toward mainstreaming than beginning students. There is also a trend to report more favorable attitudes toward mainstreaming during professional preparation prior to student teaching. Following student teaching, however, there is a significant decline in the students' attitudes toward mainstreaming. To us, these findings suggest that student teachers tend to philosophically agree with the "idea" of inclusive education but are unsure when it comes to implementing it in a classroom. The job of the beginning teacher is tough enough without adding the extra complexity of inclusion.

How will inclusive education shape the needs of education in the future?

If inclusive education is to work, schools need to develop an agenda for a unified (regular and special) educational system. Those who study inclusive education offer a number of important recommendations. These recommendations can be presented as a series of principles: (1) all stakeholders must become responsible for the education of all students within a community; (2) a unified system of education must be structured that will help ensure the quality of inclusive education for all students; (3) all students need to have accountability standards that are guaranteed through a

system of unified outcomes; (4) all educators should be prepared to educate all students; (5) funding systems should emphasize the sharing of resources; (6) site-based management become the way to build a community of learners that is responsible for each other; (7) a curriculum framework for a unified system should include dialogue about outcomes for planning and organizing schools into learning communities; (8) staff development should be provided that helps teachers consider how to restructure their workplace and foster problem solving, shared resources, and the need for continuous improvement; (9) all students and their families should have access to integrated community services at or near the school they attend; and (10) all students and staff should have access to and training in technology that appropriately supports collaborative decision making.

Setting up inclusive education in schools

Inclusive education does not always work. Many factors have led to the failures of inclusion. These include a lack of planning, a lack of collaboration, and poor funding mechanisms for special education. Still, current trends indicate that schools are moving toward more inclusive practices and are attempting to educate the majority of students with exceptional needs in the regular education classroom.

Restructuring schools so that they can implement full inclusion is a big job. This restructuring will demand that school leaders consider the factors that influence change. One of the most important jobs of any school that hopes to build a truly inclusive school and a school where inclusion actually works to help students is to create an atmosphere and a culture for change that

encompasses the school's physical surroundings and structures, the formal policies and rules of the school, the school's resources, the attitudes and beliefs of the teachers and the administration, and the relationships that are shaped as a result of the curriculum. There is a lot to think about.

When expressing the vision of inclusion, schools must emphasize the importance of expanding the vision for support. If it is to work well, inclusive education must be supported by parents, students, and teachers. School leaders must also actively demonstrate their own conviction that full inclusion is positive, and they must express this conviction through their actions. Planning curriculum change and providing resources for that change involve planning and the provision of time, money, building space, personnel, and any other resources needed to educate all students in regular classrooms.

Providing continuous staff development means providing everyone involved with the knowledge and skills necessary for the successful implementation of full inclusion. Evaluation includes regular monitoring and assessment of progress. The final factor, providing continuous assistance, requires that resources and staff development are more than one-shot events and include ongoing coaching and support.

Special Needs

All students have needs, but some have more challenging needs than others. And some have to work much harder to achieve success than others. The tradition of North American schools, until recently, has been to exclude a

variety of students from our regular public education systems. For example, students with severe physical and/or mental handicaps were placed in their own, "special" classrooms, quite separate from "regular" classrooms. The argument has typically been that it is more efficient to separate out those with difficult problems to a place where they can get "specialized help."

At the same time, North American schools have ignored the needs of gifted and talented students or only selected those students whose gifts and talents lay in "appropriate" areas. In the not-to-distant past, schools punished students with behavior disorders and learning disabilities. One of the reasons schools punished learning disorders was because it was difficult to recognize these difficulties. They became learning "problems," which meant classroom problems, because the students with these "problems" created difficulties for teachers. So, although inclusive education does make teaching more difficult, there is an up-side. Today in our schools, we are working to become more aware of these students as a legitimate part of our society and we are trying to include them in regular classroom situations. To us, the more difficult teaching situations are worth it because for the first time students who were once thought of as "problems" are seen as having a legitimate place in the fabric of society.

Some people suggest, actually sometimes it is more like complaining, that it is difficult to include special needs children in all classrooms. They have a practical point. The more diverse the differences, the more difficult it is for a teacher to accommodate these differences. As schools accept more and more diversity in classrooms, teachers need to develop further strategies for individualizing instruction. We have already suggested the difficulties of

providing this individual instruction. Developing these strategies takes a lot of extra time, especially when the life of a teacher is already so busy.

What Are Special Needs?

We have been talking about how diverse a classroom can be, but how diverse actually is a classroom? It might be valuable now, in order to help you make sense of the types of diversity that might occur in any classroom, to ask you to take a minute to list all of the "special needs" you have observed in your own classroom experiences. When you have compiled this list, you might even want to share it with others. If you do share your list, try to suggest problems for children with these special needs in a classroom setting and discuss ways to accommodate special needs into a classroom setting. Instead of seeing the student as a problem, try to imagine how school is a problem for these students.

As we stated before, all students have needs. Some have "special" needs. What are "special needs?" How can we determine the special needs of students? If you are going to become a good teacher, we believe you must become aware of distinctions in students. If you can, you will find that knowing these distinctions will provide clues about how to teach your students' with special needs more easily. The more you learn, the more you will be able to help yourself recognize and eliminate potential difficulties. Be warned, however. You will never be able to eliminate all the special problems you will face. Sometimes these problems are too difficult for you, as a teacher, to overcome. Sometimes you will have a hard time discovering these problems, no matter how hard you look. Students can be very good at hiding

their needs. It often takes an extremely sensitive and experienced teacher to uncover what students are working to hide. For example, it took more than six months for one teacher to discover that a student in his classroom was deaf. If that sounds impossible, let us assure you that it happened to one of the writers of this paper.

As a teacher, you must be constantly aware of and sensitive to what students are telling you, even when they can't or won't use words. For example, are you aware of the reasons that a student squints consistently or has difficulty in pronouncing words clearly? Are comments that seem inappropriate said out of meanness, or are they the result of cultural differences or social inequalities? Are inappropriate actions caused from substance abuse or emotional difficulties? Do we know our students well enough to distinguish behavior or action that is markedly different from their normal behaviors or actions?

Let us give you something to think about. If good, inclusive classrooms work to include all students into the fabric of their actions, what are some ways that teachers can begin to know their students more personally? How can teachers come to know their students as people rather than only as students? Or, is it important that teachers work to know students as people? What do you think?

Before you can provide your students with effective learning experiences, we believe you need to know your students as multi-faceted human beings. As teachers, we need to learn about our students' intelligence, achievement, personality, and interests. We can, with the help of other professionals in the

school (people like the counselor, learning assistance teachers, other classroom teachers, lunch supervisors, the administration, the school secretaries, and the janitors are all members of the team), identify individual student needs and use what we know about those needs to teach more effectively.

Individualizing Instruction

Teaching to special needs and individualizing instruction go hand-in-hand. A teacher who hopes to address the special needs of students must see the classroom as a group of distinct students and must teach the class as a group of individuals — not as a class. So, how does a teacher individualize instruction? Some of the more typical, instructional strategies that individualize instruction include: (1) varying assignments in ways that take advantage of unique student abilities, (2) using verbal, visual, and kinesthetic techniques in presentations, (3) using cooperative learning activities like peer tutoring and small group learning, and (4) using interactive computer programs designed for individual students.

Like all teaching, the basic goal of teaching students with special needs in mind is to develop learning aptitudes that will help students throughout their lives. Education in general, and schooling specifically, should be seen as long-term aptitude and attitude development that prepares individuals for life. Aptitude and attitude are broad concepts that subsume many individual differences. Some of these individual differences include: (1) intellectual abilities that include cognitive skills and competencies, (2) personality characteristics like enduring affective-emotional dispositions, and (3)

cognitive styles like those individual propensities for processing information in one way or another that develop around the particular abilities or personalities of students. If you are going to be an effective teacher, you must adapt your teaching style to shift the focus toward areas of student strength where students can capitalize on their unique aptitudes and learn to overcome areas of weakness or inaptitude.

When you change your teaching style in response to what you assess your students' readiness to be, you are helping your students become more successful in their learning. When this happens, teaching adapts to the students. To meet the needs of individual students, teachers can adapt, manipulate, and change the (1) organizational structures of the class (groups, learning centers, reward structures), (2) materials (examples, analogies, points of emphasis, reviews, summaries), (3) support materials (aides, media), (4) level and form of questions, (5) amount of time spent with individual students, (6) feedback, (7) pacing, and (8) evaluation to name a few. The point is that the entire classroom experience can and probably should change.

Students can also be helped to individualize their own learning. As they learn to take advantage of their own needs and aptitudes in learning, students become more mature learners. However, as we have said in the previously, helping students become mature learners means that you cannot do everything for the students, making them more dependent on you rather than less dependent.

Becoming an independent learner is not always easy. First, students have been in schools; and schools, historically, have been places that typically

encourage students to trust and follow the advice and the expertise of the teacher. Schools do not encourage students to think for themselves. To help students become independent learners means that you must structure your classrooms in ways that encourage independence.

Some strategies are more helpful in preparing students to become more independent learners than others. These strategies include: (1) provide a structured outline to students, so that they know what to expect, (2) teach sequentially step-by-step, from concrete to more abstract , (3) check frequently for comprehension to ensure that students are keeping up, (4) provide for over learning and adjust the pace accordingly, and (5) encourage students to ask for individual extra help. These activities provide a positive structure that help students feel comfortable within a learning environment. Teaching independent learning does not mean abandoning students, just like teaching someone to swim does not mean throwing him or her into the deep water.

You need to be knowledgeable about the content you will teach and how it will be taught, but you also must learn how to adjust both content and teaching practices to the individual differences that exist among learners. Teachers need to understand the powerful effect that individual differences can have on learning, and they need to become more able to adapt or match instructional methods to the individual learning needs of our students.

Because not every student learns in the same way, you can help your students by (1) conducting student-centered discussions to improve the achievement of highly anxious students, (2) including some teacher-centered lecture classes that may improve achievement among low-anxiety students, and (3)

alternating the approaches used (for example phonics or whole-word approaches when teaching reading).

Students have unique needs and strengths. Regardless of their specific needs, dealing directly with these differences means that teachers can (1) develop an understanding of the general characteristics of different types of special needs students; (2) attempt to identify and meet the students' unique needs relative to this particular classroom; (3) design lesson plans that teach to different needs at the same time whenever possible; and (4) get assistance for providing appropriate instruction from the experts available (special education teachers) in developing individualized educational plans (IEPs) which state overall goals and objectives for each student and which design instruction to fit specific special needs.

IEPs can also be used for students with exceptional talents. Multilevel teaching can provide individualized instruction to groups of varying sizes and skill levels by (1) using the same materials to teach different objectives or (2) using different materials to teach the same objectives. Some steps to multilevel teaching include:

1. defining the objective for each skill and the sequence of steps necessary to teach each of these objectives,
2. pre-testing each student to determine the entry level for a particular objective,
3. preparing data sheets for recording performance during the instructional session,
4. selecting materials that are easy to manipulate and adapt,

5. presenting instructional tasks, recording responses and other relevant information, and
6. analyzing the data after each session.

Hard Working Students

Classrooms are dynamic places of high energy and excitement. They are always filled with students who bring not only a variety of abilities to the class but who also bring with them a variety of attitudes. Students who continually strive for success but have academic difficulties will need different educational experiences than those students who are reluctant to work hard.

Most students are not evil, nor are they lazy. Sometimes students have become discouraged with previous unsuccessful attempts. Most people can only try and fail so many times before they simply give up and quit. The real heroes of school are those young people who, despite a history of failure, keep on keeping on. And, in most circumstances, they deserve more help than they get.

So, how can you help these students? Some guidelines for helping students who are willing to work hard but continue to have difficulties include:

1. Emphasize basic communication skills (such as speaking, writing, reading).
2. Work toward the improvement of basic reading skills (such as pronunciations, word meanings, comprehension).
3. Teach content in small sequential steps.

4. Vary instructional strategies often (as often as every ten minutes, depending upon your class).
5. Use frequent comprehension class checks (as often as four during a class period).
6. Use a variety of audiovisual and game materials to engage the visual, verbal, and kinesthetic learning modes.
7. Use frequent individual positive reinforcement, and work toward increasing the student's sense of personal worth.
8. Ensure that textbooks and other materials are at appropriate reading levels for the students.
9. Maximize the use of supervised in-class, on-task work and minimize the use of homework.
10. Learn about each student and developing lessons around their interests, needs, and experiences.
11. Become concerned with the students' successful understanding of content covered and their developing self-concepts rather than content coverage.
12. Individualize learning as much as possible (e.g., encourage oral expression for those limited in writing ability).
13. Teach the skills of note taking, outlining, and listening.

These guidelines also apply to students who are reluctant to work (regardless of their ability level). In addition, it is important for you to make your classroom rules and expectations clear at the beginning of the year and to follow through on what you say you will do. If you do not, the students may become confused or may come to disregard what you say. Students need help

improving their study, learning, and behavioral skills if they are going to become more successful in school activities.

Attending to Student Differences

Because there is so much to learn and consider, becoming a teacher is no easy task. It is one thing to note that there are student differences; it is another thing to know how to do something about these differences that will help students become better learners. Some student differences markedly affect their learning. These same differences cause teachers to view their jobs in different ways. Severe learning disabilities and mental or physical handicaps cause teachers to view learning and success in different ways.

Some of the important things you, as a teacher, need to consider are time, behavior, and communication. There are several different kinds of time. For example, engaged time means the length of time students are able to stay focused on a task. But there are also differences in the time some students take to learn something. You might, for example, give the same test to a group of students who all have similar knowledges. In fact, two students might receive the same grade on an exam. However, one student might finish the exam in 20 minutes; another might take 50 minutes. There may be little difference in their knowledge; however, there may be a great deal of difference in their ability or desire to work quickly.

Students have many differences, even outside of academic differences. For example, some students have been "well-schooled" at home in ways that would help them fit-in to public behavior. Other students have few social

graces. In other words, their social behavior is poor and they have never learned the simple ability to work effectively in groups, to communicate with the teacher, or to find appropriate ways to be recognized. As a result, to fulfill the common human need to be recognized and considered, they do stupid things. Why? Because they need to belong more than they need to follow the social rules. Some students have never learned good work habits, neatness, and the ability to organize. Some students probably never will. These differences obviously impact on what we, as teachers, can do and how we think.

The quality of the program in any school is the most important factor when integrating special needs students into the regular classroom. But in the instruction of all students, three elements should be present in the program:

1. An appropriate learning environment. Special learners need to be accepted as unique individuals with very special talents, but with significant limitations. We can not and should not pretend to understand what it is like to be "handicapped," nor should we patronize or show undue sympathy to the student for his or her "condition." These students should be treated the same as all other students in the classroom. All students, despite their needs, should be treated like all other students — in some ways. For example, all students should be given respect and shown that they are "okay."

Some teachers believe that they should "go easy" on students with learning problems. On the surface, such an act of "kindness" seems appropriate. But the practical problem is that going easy on some students

means lowering standards and the human truth is that people typically respond to the standards expected of them. If you expect lower standards, you will typically get them. You should set reasonably high expectations and help the learner set realistic goals. Handicaps should not be used as excuses for failing to reach goals. A predictable and consistent schedule and set of routines provides external security for the special needs learner.

2. A meaningful curriculum. The curriculum for each student in a class should be determined by the individual educational plan and should reflect (1) instruction that is linked to the present level of progress, (2) frequent assessment of progress in order to make adjustments, (3) a focus on the mastery of essential basic skills, (4) a provision for direct instruction, (5) a sequence and a continuity of instruction, and (6) individual pacing for each student.

3. Quality instruction. As previously mentioned, teachers should maximize learning time and structure learning so that individual success rate is high. Teachers should also provide individual corrective feedback at regular and frequent intervals.

Learning is always tied to a student's self-perception. Students who have a positive self-concept will learn; those with a poor self-concept will not learn. Self-concept will affect attitude, which will affect the willingness to work, which will affect how much and how successfully students will learn. Differences in student self-concept affect how actively students become engaged in the learning process. The idea is simple: students will never learn if they don't actively engage learning.

Self-concept

Whether they like it or not, teachers have influence over the formation of our students' self-concepts. Our performance as effective teachers should be guided by a belief in the inherent value of the unique talents and contributions of each individual student. One way to improve a student's self-concept is to find and reflect back to that student the value of his or her unique talents and strengths. As teachers, we can do this by encouraging self-management skills that will lead to greater independence and task completion, using peer tutoring, pairing students with different strengths, using learning centers and microcomputer software, and using less formal classroom arrangements.

Outside Factors

The home lives of students create differences that affect their learning. The family and society continue to put the responsibility for creating well-rounded individuals onto the schools. Schools and teachers play a sort of schizophrenic drama with the rest of society. On one hand, society expects miracles from schools and teachers. On the other hand, society is always dumping on schools and teachers -- blaming them collectively for all sorts of sins and wrong-doings. One of the problems of teaching is the sort of Catch-22 situation in which teachers live.

Whether or not schools can shape individual students to the extent that the family and the society believe is a moot question. The fact is that teachers

have accepted this assignment as part of their jobs. But teachers are not the only influence on the academic or social success of students. Research has attributed several factors in the home and in society to the level of success students are able to achieve in school. Television and home videos, single-parent families, poverty, the desire for consumer or material success, and the emphasis on leisure all contribute to the ways that students learn. For one student, the home situation can spur learning; for another, the same home situation can discourage attempts at learning. As we have said before, teaching students is a complex task.

Socioeconomic status creates large and important differences in the classroom and influences the achievement of students. However, many educators believe that intelligence can be altered through instruction. These educators further believe that classrooms are the logical place to develop intelligence. Some theories of intelligence believe that intelligence consists of three parts: (1) an individual's internal world; (2) the way in which an individual acquires knowledge, and (3) an individual's external world.

Given this construct of intelligence, certain characteristics can impede intelligent thinking or behavior. These include: lack of motivation, lack of impulse control, lack of perseverance, using the wrong abilities, the inability to translate thought into action, a lack of product orientation, the inability to complete tasks and to follow through, failure to initiate, fear of failure,- procrastination, misattribution of blame, excessive self-pity, excessive dependency, wallowing in personal difficulties, distractibility and lack of concentration, inability to delay gratification, inability or unwillingness to see

the forest for the trees, lack of balance between critical and creative thinking, and too little or too much self-confidence.

Considering this list, the classroom is the logical place to convey attitudes and behaviors that can help learners avoid these impediments to intelligent behavior. To reduce achievement differences as much as possible and to get lower socioeconomic status students ready to learn, teachers can do the following:

1) incorporate a variety of audiovisual aids and exploratory materials into the lessons,
2) have high expectations,
3) reward intellectual accomplishments,
4) provide support and encouragement,
5) help students expand their vocabularies and quality of language by providing access to newspapers, periodicals, and popular books, and
6) seek opportunities for lower socioeconomic students to talk about their experiences and realize that they have valuable contributions to make to the class.

Intelligence

Gardner, 1993, has concluded that there is more than one type of intelligence. If a classroom is to work well, these different types of intelligence need to be recognized. Gardner suggests that there are seven intelligences:

1) musical intelligence,

2) bodily-kinesthetic intelligence,
3) logical/mathematical intelligence,
4) linguistic intelligence,
5) spatial intelligence,
6) interpersonal intelligence, and
7) intrapersonal intelligence.

Learning activities require different degrees of these component parts of intelligence. The problem with schools has typically been that the traditional curricula have focused on some of these intelligences while discounting others as being unimportant to successful academic learning.

As the fabric of our society changes there is more need than ever to consider alternative ways of viewing learning and success. Teachers can no longer assume that all students in our classrooms have the same backgrounds, beliefs, values, or understandings that we do. They often do not even share common understandings with each other. This fact does not mean, however, that education should not focus on some core curricula or some basic, ethical ideals. As teachers, we believe that all students should have, at least, the following experiences. Inclusive classrooms should especially be places where these basic educational opportunities exist:

1) **equity** — all students, regardless of social class and ethnicity, should experience an equal opportunity to learn in school,
2) **acceptance** — all students need to be guided to develop positive attitudes toward different ethnic groups,

3) **power** — students from victimized groups need to be taught decision-making and social action skills,
4) **interdependency** — all students need to acquire cross-cultural dependency and view themselves from the perspectives of different groups,
5) **accommodation without assimilation** — teachers need to help members of diverse ethnic groups learn how to participate effectively in two cultural frames — their own and that of the school, and
6) **expansion** — teachers should work to provide students with a range of ways of seeing, knowing, thinking, and being that enables them to break from their everyday experiences.

When creating lesson plans, we should keep these goals in mind. These are important goals for every student in every class. How can we structure lessons that consider these goals? What strategies might be useful in creating awareness in students without creating hostility and defensive behavior? How do we involve the community in achieving these goals? How do we uncover the hidden curricula (unintended learnings acquired through the values, norms, and practices of the institution) and address it with students and colleagues?

How can curriculum be adapted for all students? This question is an important one to think about. Each of us is "included" into some form of minority group and can learn from understanding different perspectives and points of view. To help yourself answer this important question, we think it is important to take a minute to brainstorm a variety of activities and

strategies that could connect to your subject area and promote the goals listed above.

Brain Research

As scientists unravel the mysteries of the brain, the implications of the findings will help educators expand on what they know about focusing student attention on learning. Attention — the ability to focus the mind — is a prerequisite for learning. Difficulty in concentrating may be the result of seriously disruptive illnesses such as attention deficit disorder (ADD) and dyslexia. Or it may be that students simply don't concentrate.

The brain is continually shifting between external events and internal memories and interests. This is an important element in maintaining and updating long-term memories because it ties past experiences to the present situation. Although they would never state it this way, much of a student's conscious activity involves the deliberate search for cultural experiences (conversations, books, TV) that will trigger memories. Recalling and retelling memories strengthens the neural networks that contain and process them. The principle attentional activity is the constant conscious selection of a current focus. However, emotion dominates reason in many attentional decisions. A stressful situation can chemically trigger a focus on something unimportant. The brain is designed to simultaneously process information from at least two noncompeting stimuli or from different dimensions within the same modality. The ability to divide our attention can be increased through practice and experience.

Researchers have recently identified a coordination problem in the timing of the visual pathway systems, causing dyslexia. Our brain processes sensory information through two separate pathway systems, a fast system that processes the background (where objects are located), and a slower system that processes the foreground (what the objects are). The fast visual system of dyslexics appears to be sluggish and doesn't erase the previous fixation quickly enough when the eyes move rapidly from word to word in reading, resulting in blurring and fusing words.

Although teachers do not have the time, nor often the inclination, to understand scientific research regarding disorders and disabilities, some of this research information can inform us how to work with those students in our classrooms. We may more easily be able to devise strategies for students suffering from these disorders if we understand what is actually going on in the minds and eyes of the students. We may be able to adapt our instruction to the built-in limitations of our students' stable attentional mechanisms. For example, we might choose to flip a light switch rather than call out in a noisy classroom, or to change activities frequently, or to offer more socially engaging subjects in the afternoon.

We can also use imaginative teaching and management strategies to enhance the development of our students' adaptable attention processes. We can incorporate discussions, debates, and story-telling activities that encourage students to hold pieces of information in their minds in order to respond when their turn comes. We can incorporate cooperative learning activities that encourage students to attend to others' as well as their own contributions. Simulations, role-playing, and games require students to

compare the real world with a created world, and metaphoric stories and dramas providing only the outlines of the story encourage students to fill in their own personal details. As well, metacognitive discussions with students about attention helps them to confront their own thought processes.

The Legal Rights of Children with Special Needs

Almost all provinces have an explicit statement of the rights of children with special needs to appropriate educational services. Bill 82 is based on the following principles:

1. universal access to a school program,
2. education without payment of fees,
3. early and ongoing identification, assessment of needs, and progress review. Each school board is required to have an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee to which referrals are made by parents or teachers through the school principal. IPRC determines if the student has special needs, recommends an appropriate placements, and conducts annual reviews. Parents must approve the special placement.
4. appropriate programming. A school board must seek an appropriate placement in a neighboring board if it cannot meet the special needs of a student. An IEP (Individual Educational Plan) will contain the following information:

    1) a child's present level of performance across a range of domains,
    2) specifically stated long-range or annual goals,

3) short-term objectives delineating the particular skills required to reach the long-range goal,
4) specific educational and support services and personnel required to attain each objective, e.g. speech therapist, teacher's aide,
5) timelines for special education services, and
6) evaluation procedures for each instructional objective and long-range goal.

5. access to an appeal process with regard to identification and placement

A Final Word

Clearly, inclusive education is here. Clearly, teaching in an inclusive classroom can be difficult. However, there are rewards for teachers. We believe one of the highest rewards of teaching is to help others, especially students. Teaching students with disabilities, regardless of what those disabilities are, is rewarding.

Inclusive education does not always work. Many factors have led to the failures of inclusion. These include a lack of planning, a lack of collaboration, and poor funding mechanisms for special education. Still, current trends indicate that schools are moving toward more inclusive practices and are attempting to educate the majority of students with exceptional needs in the regular education classroom.

Restructuring your classroom so that they reflect the best opportunities for inclusion can be a difficult job. Such restructuring will demand that you consider the factors that influence change. One of your most important jobs is

to create an atmosphere and a culture for change that encompasses the school's physical surroundings and structures, the formal policies and rules of the school, the school's resources, your own attitudes and beliefs and those of the administration, and the relationships that are shaped as a result of the curriculum. There is a lot to think about.

If inclusive education is to work well, it must be supported by parents, students, and teachers. School leaders must also actively demonstrate their own conviction that full inclusion is positive, and they must express this conviction through their actions. Planning curriculum change and providing resources for that change involve planning and the provision of time, money, building space, personnel, and any other resources needed to educate all students in regular classrooms.

The research on inclusive education is promising. The results of several studies on the "regular" students show that regular students do not suffer in developmental outcomes. Whether they are in an inclusive classroom or not, regular students seem to develop at the same rate. Furthermore, research suggests that when children with disabilities are in the class, the teacher does not spend any less time with regular students. In other words, research does not show any significant decrease in the development of regular students when they are in the same classroom as disabled students. However, these same studies show that inclusion has proved beneficial in promoting the personal and educational development of regular students. Inclusive classrooms seem to be classrooms where students can learn and grow. Certainly they are classrooms where new teachers have ample opportunities to learn their trades.

What we want teachers to remember about inclusive education is that the methodologies that work well in regular classrooms also work well in inclusive classrooms. Good teaching is good teaching. There is no doubt that the principles of good teaching may have to be "tweaked" in inclusive classrooms, but these principles do not change drastically.

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